Wang Zhenyi: Star Student

Alice Reed
2025

In this text, the author tells about the life of Wang Zhenyi.

Wang Zhenyi lived in China during the early Qing dynasty, the last imperial dynasty in Chinese history. In an imperial dynasty, the power to rule is passed down within a family, such as from father to son. During this time, women had few rights. This made it hard for them to get an education.

But from a young age, Wang was excited and determined to learn. Nothing, not even her country, was going to stop her. Wang would go on to become a very successful scientist, writer, and scholar.

The early years

Born in 1768, Wang lived in eastern China with her father, grandfather, and grandmother. Her family members were some of Wang's first teachers. Her father studied medicine and would go on to teach Wang the subject, as well as geography and math. Wang's grandfather taught her astronomy, and her grandmother taught her poetry. Soon, Wang was teaching herself.

During her teen years, Wang traveled throughout eastern China with her family. Seeing new places and meeting new people fueled Wang's curiosity about the world. There was so much for her to learn! At 18 years old, Wang

decided to focus her studies on her two favorite subjects: astronomy and math.

A thirst for knowledge

Wang knew how important it was for the ideas in books to be accessible to all. She rewrote an older, complicated book on mathematics called *Principles of Calculation* by Mei Wending. Wang's version was easier to understand. She also wrote her own math textbook for beginners. It was called *The Simple Principles of Calculation*.

Wang used her love for math and astronomy to explore the mysteries of space. Her main interest was in eclipses. An eclipse is when one object in space, like a planet or moon, moves through the shadow of another object in space. During Wang's time, people thought eclipses were caused by the gods. Through her studies, Wang was able to explain the science behind eclipses.

When Wang wasn't busy studying the night sky or solving math problems, she wrote poetry. Her poetry explored themes important to her life. She wrote about the value of education, her love of science, and the importance of treating people equally. In total, Wang wrote 13 books of poetry!

Leaving her mark

Sadly, Wang died at the young age of twenty-nine. Even though her life was short, Wang accomplished much. Through her studies and writings, Wang left her mark on the world. She showed that a person's gender should not affect the dreams they wish to chase.

While not everyone believed in Wang, she never let that stop her. Wang worked tirelessly, studying and teaching others. She once said, "There were times that I had to put down my pen and sigh. But I love the subject; I do not give up."

All Schools Should Have Recess

Meredith Engel
2019

Meredith Engel writes in favor of recess at school.

Some schools have recess and some don't. Experts say that recess can help students succeed just as much as extra reading or math lessons!

Recess gives kids a chance to have fun and exercise during the school day. This leads to better classroom behavior and better grades. Students who have recess are better behaved and listen more closely in class. And they're more likely to come to school in the first place! It's no wonder so many people believe that school should have recess.

Recess boosts student scores

Many schools worry about student scores on end of year tests. Recess may be one way to help students on these tests. The CDC reported that physical activity, like running and playing outside, can boost students' test scores. This can also help students' grades in the classroom. Schools should try giving students twenty minutes to play outside every day. That's a lot cheaper than buying extra textbooks!

Recess makes the classroom a better place

Recess can also help how kids act in class. Teachers want calm and quiet classrooms when they teach. Students are less likely to interrupt after they have had time to play with classmates. Being quiet makes it easier for everyone to pay attention in class. One study found that students finished more work after they were given recess. Kids are able to spend a lot of energy while on the playground. Getting rid of this extra energy helps students pay more attention to their work.

Recess helps student attendance and health

Recess also helps keep kids in school. Students who have recess tend to enjoy school more. So they are more likely to go to school every day. It can be tough catching up on lessons when you miss a school day. When students go to school every day, they do better in their classes.

But that's not all! Students who have recess also make smarter health choices. Kids who have recess eat more fruits and vegetables at lunch — 54% more in fact! And recess is the perfect time for students to get more exercise in their day. Regular recess creates happier, healthier kids.

If adults want to see students do better in school, they should think about adding recess to their schedules. It's an easy and fun way to boost students' grades, attendance, and health.

The Rainy Season

Sue Gibbison
2020

In this story, the narrator's grandmother remembers her home in Apia on the island of Samoa.

“Look at that,” said Malia. “Special airfares to Apia, this month only.”

“You know why?” said Auntie Sina sharply. “Because it’s the rainy season, of course. Who wants to go to a tropical island and get wet?”

“Ah,” said Nana softly. “The rainy season…”

Malia smiled at her grandmother. Malia knew her grandmother yearned to return to Samoa. She’d even saved up the fare, but now that Papa had passed on, would she ever have the courage to go back?

That afternoon Malia sat in the kitchen with Nana, drinking hot sweet tea.

“Tell me about the rainy season, Nana,” said Malia.

Nana gazed at the fine mat hanging on the wall, and the shine came into her eyes again.

“The rainy season,” she murmured. “Sometimes the rain starts at dawn, rippling the lagoon while the fishermen are out setting their nets. During the day it gets more intense, dripping off the banyan leaves and making puddles

in the pathways. At night it's pouring down, beating like a drum on the roof of the *fale* while you're asleep on your woven mat."

Nana was quiet for a moment, remembering. "Or the day might start off warm," she said, "and then it gets so hot and steamy that you feel like you're being cooked in the *umu*. Up in the mountains the clouds gather, getting bigger and blacker until — BOOM! Down comes the rain and everything's washed clean again."

Nana went quiet once more.

"Mmmm… " she smiled. "The smell of that rain!" She closed her eyes and breathed in deeply, as if she could smell the rain right now.

Malia loved it when Nana talked about Samoa.

"What does it smell like, Nana?"

The old lady squeezed her eyes shut, took another deep breath and smacked her lips as if she could taste that rain.

"It smells of earth and plants and flowers," said Nana at last. "It smells of soil and black lava rocks, of taro and breadfruit, of teuila and frangipani flowers. It smells of home."

"Maybe," said Auntie Sina, filling the teapot. "But what about the floods and those pesky *namu* that buzz around all night, sneaking through holes in the mosquito nets and biting anyone they can find?"

"Well," said Nana shortly, "that's home too."

"Hmmmph!" said Auntie. "I still say, who would want to go in the rainy season?"

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The next day, Malia was walking past the travel agent when a Samoa poster caught her eye. She opened the door and went in.

"I want to take my grandmother to Samoa," said Malia. "She has the money, but she needs someone to go with her. She hasn't been back in over thirty years."

"It really is a very good deal," said the travel agent. "Children fly free! And it is just about the end of the rainy season."

"Nana can still remember the smell of the rainy season," smiled Malia.